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Abuse of Authority

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The Indians who today live under the paternal rule of the missionaries state that formerly caciques committed thousands of abuses; speaking of caciques still alive, they said that they abused everything that belonged to the poor and defenseless Indians, made use of maidens and women of others took possession of horses, cows, sheep, goats, and rags or clothing of their subordinates under any pretext, and in certain cases, as absolute mandatory, life was not safe either.

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In verification of the last, I am going to relate the following: Before the reorganization of the missions of San Antonio and San Francisco del Parapiti Grande, an Indian strangled his own son and half buried him in the sand near the bank with the aim that any sizable rise would soon carry him off, but before this could happen the deed was discovered, not by betrayal by his wife, whom he had threatened to kill, but by the wheeling about of vultures which were beginning to strip the already decomposing flesh (2).

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2. The murderer of his own son belonged to the upper town and was hanged in public in the lower town where the regional cacique, who was the authority of the presumed Parapiti Canton, resided.

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When the regional cacique had been advised, inquiries were undertaken in order to speak to the evil-doer, and it was not difficult to find him because he was a well-known Indian. Taken into custody and brought before the authority, he confessed his crime. In order to prevent another greater crime the canton authority attempted to intervene, but the regional cacique made it clear to him that justice would be administered in an exemplary fashion by him and that the corregidor, whose subalterns were the whites, should not involve himself in the matter at all.

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622 643 648 566 46 Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the cacique of a large number of Indians, like Tarüire, derives great benefits from his office. While the annoyances are continuous, the income is regular, because generally the caray who makes a request for peons always gives their daily pay to the cacique and alcaldes, and if the former visits them in their houses, they save certain considerations for him in the interest of obtaining peons in the future; interest can do much (2).

2. They keep everything they receive from the whites to buy liquor and little for their clothing.

62 595 It would be a very rare case if a Chiriguano cacique did not have issue, it being known that each one lives with several women, privately and publicly, in his own and other tribes, and this is not only the privilege of the caciques; even the subalterns are polygamous. They often marry a widow in order later also to be with the stepdaughter with the knowledge of her mother, who consents to it through fear, out of concern for food, or for a miserable garment (3).

[797] 3. The vice of polygamy is being pursued in the missions, not only among the Indians but even among the caciques; some admonition should come first, however, to convince them and make them understand the ugliness of the vice.

622 [555] [556] /165/ Upon the death of the cacique of a tribe, the oldest son then succeeds, but, if in fact he dies without issue, the closest relative takes command, or, lacking one of these, some prestigious brother-in-law, if he is liked by the tribe; otherwise someone in the town who combines the best qualities in his person is chosen, and if an Indian enjoys some good fortune in cattle, sheep, horses, etc., he is the chosen one, who is respected and obeyed because of the goods that he has at his disposal for guests and even for treating his subalterns (1).

[661] 1. When a cacique is completely poor, he

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622 661 may be considered the scourge of the tribe, and, as an absolute ruler, he takes from the belongings of his soldiers whatever he wants for himself and for the guests who visit him.

622 562 Very rarely does a woman take command and control of the tribe; this can happen if the cacique who dies leaves only women as heirs, but only with great difficulty does the Chiriguano allow himself to be ruled by a woman; the other tribes would laugh at them and would treat them like women; Salic law is in force among the Chiriguano (2).

2. Nevertheless, there are cases when the law of the Salians has been suspended among the Chiriguano. The woman Iguandúsai governed in Ivu, Parapoti in Aquío, and a certain Arabúsai is mentioned by del Campano.

643 The Regional Cacique

In addition to the cacique, whom the people of a tribe distinguish with the name of Mburubicha, great one, there is another, higher authority whom they call Tubicha rubicha, great one of the great ones, or cacique of the caciques. The great cacique resides in a larger tribe and leads it directly like the other caciques, having alcaldes and counselors.

643 622 The great cacique intervenes and is consulted with regard to the succession of the subaltern caciques; for this reason the sons of the latter always accompany their fathers on the visits they make and try to get the great cacique to like them, in order to succeed their fathers in power, but if the tribe does not want him and furthermore his faults are so notorious and serious as to eliminate him from the honor, the regional cacique very tactfully makes him understand this, adding that by reforming his life he could be chosen again on a day not far off.